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 No. 7.

THE  
 CHRISTIAN YEAR

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JULY, 1893

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THE  
CHRISTIAN VISITOR.

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Are rival joys contending for thy choice?  
Consult thy whole existence, and be safe;  
That oracle will put all doubt to flight.  
Short is the lesson, though my lecture long:  
*Be good*—and let heaven answer for the rest.

YOUNG.

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VOL. I.

JULY, 1823.

No. 7.

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ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

The unreasonableness of indecision  
in religion.

NO. II.

In a former number, we considered the unreasonableness of indecision in regard to the *truth* of the christian religion. In the present, we shall consider the unreasonableness of indecision in regard to its *nature*. There are those who have never arrived at any satisfactory conclusion respecting the question, in what does true religion consist? They believe that there is such a thing as true religion, and that it is something of great importance to mankind, both as it respects their happiness here and hereafter. But whether it consists in mere external morality; or in this, connected with that mental discipline, which is the result of a more refined selfishness, than that which leads to gross sensuality; or in that disinterested love to God and their fellow-creatures, which mankind are influenced to exercise by the

operation of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, they have not determined. Sometimes they are inclined to believe, that nothing more is essential to their salvation, than what the world calls good morality. At others, they are painfully apprehensive that the eye of God is upon the heart, and that his judgment of character is according to the feelings which there prevail.—But still, perhaps, they think, that the heart needs improving only, not renewing. A cultivation of those amiable traits of character, which are common to mankind, and which are all consistent with an ultimate and supreme regard to self, appears to them the best kind of religion, and all that is in fact necessary. At other times, perceiving that the law of God requires them to love him with all the heart, and their fellow-creatures as themselves, and knowing that, after all their refinement of feeling and improvement of intellect, they really love the world more than God, and themselves more than their fellow-creatures, they cannot but fear that a change of heart is essential to their salvation. When they consider how many of their fellow-creatures around them appear never to have experienced any thing like a change of heart, and especially of those whose amiable dispositions and useful lives have gained them the affection and respect of the world, they have little belief in experimental religion. They naturally conclude, that it is enough for them to be like the world in general. But again they reflect, that according to the scriptures, “the world lieth in wickedness,” that “wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat”—that “strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” These reflections renew their fears, that something more, than they now possess, is essential to qualify them for heaven. When

by any means their attention is turned to the word of God—when their circumstances lead them to be intimate with saints of distinguished piety—when they have opportunity to witness signal displays of the power and grace of God, in turning sinners from the error of their ways, they can scarcely avoid a distinct and deep impression, that religion is the fruit of the special operation of the Holy Spirit. But for the greater part of the time, thinking little upon the subject of religion, associating but seldom with those who feel and manifest its power, and habitually indulging the love of the world in their hearts; they feel little interest in studying the word of God, or in attending to the displays of his special grace. In the mean time, perhaps they hear that religion, which consists in disinterested love to God and man, made the subject of reproach and misrepresentation. In these circumstances, their former impressions in favour of its truth and importance, are in a great degree erased, and they begin again to look for something else, as that in which it consists. Thus are they undecided in regard to the nature of religion. Sometimes they think it consists in one thing, and sometimes in another; but they never have any rational, fixed and settled opinion, such as is the result of a serious, patient and prayerful examination of the scriptures, respecting it. Now this indecision in regard to the nature of religion, we affirm to be unreasonable; because,

1. There is no insuperable difficulty in ascertaining in what it consists. The scriptures are very plain on this subject. They expressly assert that *love* is the fulfilling of the law. And they shew with equal plainness what kind of love it is that answers the demands of the law, and constitutes the religion of the gospel. It is a love which is disinterested in its nature, and which approves of its object, not in proportion to its connexion with

or its supposed disposition or tendency to benefit self in particular, but according to its apparent excellence; which desires the happiness of its object, not merely because it is nearly connected with self, but because it is capable of enjoyment or suffering. As God is a being of infinite excellence, the scriptures require mankind to love him supremely. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." As the characters of mankind are, generally speaking, essentially alike, and as they have the same capacity for enjoyment or suffering, they are required to love each other as themselves, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self." That the love to God, in which true religion primarily consists is supreme, may be seen, not only from the words of the law above quoted, but from the following words of Christ. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." That the love to man, which makes a part of true religion, is impartial or disinterested, is demonstrable, not only from the words of the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self," but from the circumstance that it is a love of *enemies* as well as friends. Christ not only inculcates the love of enemies, but speaks of love to them as a distinguishing trait in the christian character, "Ye have heard that it has been said by them of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy, but I say unto you love your *enemies*. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners, also, love those that love them." Here we are plainly taught that love to mankind, in order to be acceptable to God, or characteristic of his children, must extend to *enemies*, as well as to friends. But that must be a disinterested affection, which embraces an *enemy* as its object. There may be selfishness in doing good to an enemy; but love to an enemy must be disinterested.

But it is not more evident from scripture that the love, in which true religion consists is disinterested, and in respect to God supreme, than it is, that this is the effect of the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit. John says, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Paul says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love." It is agreeable to the experience, as well as to the observation of mankind, that they are destitute of that holy love, which the Divine law requires, and under the influence of affections of a totally opposite nature, until the Spirit of God changes their hearts. But if scripture, observation and experience all confirm the truth that religion primarily consists in the exercise of that disinterested love to God and man which is the fruit of the Spirit, there is certainly no insuperable difficulty in determining in what it consists. It must be supposed, that the scriptures can be understood by those, for whose benefit they were given; and that mankind, in general, are capable of determining what is the result of their own observation and experience. But if there is no insuperable difficulty in determining in what true religion consists, it must be very unreasonable to be undecided upon the subject. For

2. It is of great importance to every one to know in what true religion consists. Those who are undecided in regard to the nature of true religion must of course be undecided respecting the character of God, their own character, and the duties which they owe to God and their fellow creatures. They can not know what God is until they know what he has required of his creatures; and as true religion consists in doing what God requires of his creatures, they will have no more true knowledge of him than they have definite ideas of religion. As true religion comprises the duties which mankind owe to God and each other, they must



be as deficient in their knowledge of duty, as they are in their knowledge of religion. As their characters must be holy or sinful according as they perform or neglect their duty, they will have no more accurate or definite views of their true characters, than they have of religion. As their condition depends upon the character which they sustain in the sight of God, they will be just as ignorant of what awaits them in eternity, as they are of the nature of religion. One reason why so many have no deeper sense of their obligations to become religious, and feel no more anxious at the thought that they are destitute of the one thing needful is, they give not themselves the trouble of determining in what it consists. In consequence of their mistaken views upon the subject of religion, many are doubtless deceived with respect to their characters and prospects, thinking themselves to be truly religious, while they are entirely destitute of that holy love in which true religion consists; and expecting eventually to obtain "an inheritance with them that are sanctified," while in fact, they have "no part or lot in the matter." Mankind are liable, not only to remain in doubt and error respecting their character and condition, in consequence of being undecided in regard to the nature of religion; but use their influence against, rather than for its promotion. Now if these are the consequences of being undecided respecting the question, in what does true religion consist? how important is it to every one to be established in the truth upon this subject? If there is no insuperable difficulty in ascertaining what religion is, do not those act a very unreasonable part, who live without a satisfactory knowledge of the subject? Were they only to injure their characters, or fortunes, by remaining undecided in regard to the nature of religion, their indecision, if not necessary, would be unreasonable. How



much more unreasonable then is it, when its obvious consequences are, spiritual darkness, self-deception, and an exposure to all the guilt and wretchedness of being found fighting against God. A.

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### On the manner of Reading the Scriptures.

The holy scriptures exhibit a perfect rule of faith and practice;—a rule by which the correctness or incorrectness of all religious sentiments must be ultimately determined, and the guilt or innocence of human conduct measured;—a rule indeed by which the retributions of eternity will be dispensed. It must argue great want of reflection in any person, and a surprising stupidity in respect to his highest good, not to feel interested in knowing and retaining habitually in his mind what the scriptures teach. It is with much reason that the greatest men who have appeared in the world have revered the scriptures and esteemed religious truth more precious than gold. Newton and Locke, whose intellectual powers and attainments have ranked them among the first of philosophers, received the bible as the word of God, and studied it as a source of knowledge far more valuable than any which could be derived from the study of nature. The latter somewhere observes, "I thank God for the light of revelation, which sets my poor reason at rest in many things which lay beyond the reach of its discovery." Lord Bacon, a man of equal eminence, says to God in one of his prayers, "I have sought thee in-courts, fields and gardens; but I have found thee in thy temples;" meaning, doubtless, that he had acquired a knowledge of God, not from the works of nature, but from the holy scriptures illustrated in the

house of worship. In acquiring a knowledge of the scriptures much must evidently depend upon the manner of reading them. If we read them but seldom, and then with carelessness, or under the influence of prejudice, not to speak of the guilt in which we involve ourselves, we read in vain. He who would be familiar with the interesting instructions which they contain, must read them with attention, with frequency, with candour, with a conviction of their divine origin, and with prayer for the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit.

The first requisite in reading the scripture is *attention*. It may be safely affirmed that there is no faculty or exertion of the mind on which the acquisition of knowledge so much depends as this. It is principally owing to the different degrees of attention with which persons read and think that some will understand a subject so much easier and better than others, and retain it familiarly in their recollection, when others have forgotten it. Attention is subservient to clear and distinct apprehensions and to a ready and retentive memory. But without attention what can be thereby known or long remembered? He who peruses a book with carelessness can derive but little advantage from it. If the ideas it contains enter his mind at all, they are like characters written in the sand and are soon effaced. He does not feel a sufficient interest in them, or keep them in view a sufficient length of time to receive from them any distinct and permanent impression. His thoughts are wandering on other subjects, and the one under consideration, however important, is imperfectly apprehended. He has scarcely closed the volume when he finds it difficult to form a clear conception of what he has been reading. The case is widely different with him who reads with a wakeful and vigorous attention. He is far more likely to understand the subject before him, for it

interests his feelings, his mind is upon it, he views it in some of its most important attitudes and relations. If the book is well chosen, he is in a way to acquire and retain important knowledge. The ideas presented to his mind instead of being compared to characters inscribed in the sand, admit of a more just comparison with characters engraved in marble. The correctness of this representation rests upon experience. It is implied in our practice. If we deem it important to become familiarly acquainted with any book or with any part of a book, we peruse it with a deliberate and close attention. And surely a similar attention cannot be less requisite in examining the scriptures. Their doctrines and precepts, though expressed with sufficient plainness, are not likely to be understood by him who is unwilling to bestow upon them this mental exertion; and still less likely are they to be remembered and to produce any salutary effects upon his character. It is too often the case that the sacred volume is read with carelessness. It is taken up with reluctance and while the eye runs rapidly along its lines, the heart is not interested, and the mind is led off to other subjects by every casual aberration of thought. To read the scriptures thus is not only fruitless, but involves a shameful and criminal irreverence of their author. It cannot be otherwise than displeasing to him, and injurious to the spiritual interests of those who indulge it.

To a right understanding of the scriptures it is necessary that they be read not only attentively but *frequently*. They are too extensive and embrace too great a variety of subjects, to be very thoroughly understood, either by a cursory perusal, or by an attention to them interrupted by long intervals. He who only now and then takes them up and reads a few chapters, whatever be the attention with which he does it, is likely to con-

tinue ignorant of much important instruction which they contain. Being acquainted with them only in detached parts, instead of discerning the connection and harmony of their doctrines and precepts, he is liable to fall into errors from partial and limited views, or to imagine inconsistencies where a more thorough examination would convince him that no inconsistencies exist. Nor should it be thought that a single, though attentive and thorough reading of the scriptures is sufficient. The bible is not like many other books from which, after a first or second perusal, we have acquired all the important information they can impart. It contains a fund of the most valuable knowledge, which the longest life devoted to the study of it would not exhaust. We may read it again and again, with close attention, and find each time many interesting ideas which had escaped us before; and that not by reading it with fanciful interpretations, but by considering the genuine import of its language. And besides, a frequent study of the bible is necessary that we may retain the knowledge we acquire. That *attention* which has already been mentioned is highly favourable to this end, but it is not alone sufficient. Knowledge which we value must be impressed on the mind by frequent reviews. If we neglect it we lose it. It is for want of frequent recurrences to what we have read or heard, or seen or thought, that more than half of what we learn vanishes into forgetfulness. If long intervals of time elapse between the periods of our reading the scriptures, we shall read them to little profit. The lively impression which visible objects make upon us, and the superior interest which we too often feel in them, will lead us to forget and disregard what the Holy Spirit has taught us. The design of studying the scriptures is not merely to *know* what they teach, but to have our hearts and lives made

better by the influence of religious truth. "Sanctify them through thy truth" said our saviour in his prayer for his disciples. Again he said to the Jews, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." But truth can have no sanctifying influence only as it is present to the mind. We need therefore, line upon line, precept upon precept." We need to imitate the noble Bereans who searched the scriptures *daily*. How much time should be appropriated to this duty, must depend upon circumstances; but it is believed that few persons are in danger of employing too many hours upon a subject so intimately connected with their present and future welfare.

J. S.

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### Sincere love to Jesus Christ.

When Christ was on earth he had many professed disciples and followers, who were not his sincere and faithful friends. And ever since there have doubtless been many persons, who have professed and supposed themselves to be his friends, while they have been wholly destitute of that sincere love to him, which he requires and which is essential to the character of real christians. It is exceedingly important, that all persons, and especially that all professors of religion should consider and understand the nature of sincere love to Jesus Christ. It is therefore desired that the following remarks on this subject may receive the serious and candid attention of every reader.

1. Sincere love to Christ implies loving him for what he is in himself. The most odious object may be loved for the sake of another object. But no object is properly or sincerely loved, unless it be loved on its own ac-

count, or for what it is in itself. The Saviour was greatly beloved, while he was on earth by multitudes, who were not pleased with his true character. When he rode in triumph into Jerusalem, multitudes that went before and that followed after, "cried, saying, hosannah to the son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosannah in the highest."—These persons received him as a temporal deliverer, and loved him for the temporal benefits they expected to receive from him; but they had no love to his mediatorial character. Christ was always able to distinguish those, who loved him from selfish motives, and spoke to them and treated them according to their real character. "When he was at Jerusalem at the passover, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." At another time he upbraided his professed friends and followers for their mercenary motives:—"Verily I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." Though men love Christ ever so much for the favors they imagine they have received or hope to receive; yet there is no sincerity in their love. Christ is supremely excellent. He possesses all divine and human excellencies. He is worthy to be loved for what he is in himself. And they who love him sincerely, are heartily attached to his personal character and conduct. They love him because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity; because he loved God and was willing to die to support his character and make it honourable in pardoning sinners. Their love does not depend upon their knowing whether he died for them in particular, or whether they belong to the number of the

number of the elect, or whether they shall finally be brought to the kingdom of God; but their love terminates upon the real excellencies and perfections of the divine Redeemer.

2. Sincere love to Christ is supreme love to him.— They who love him for what he is in himself, must love him supremely; for he is in himself supremely amiable. When he was on earth the Saviour in his instructions insisted much upon this mark of sincerity. He said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." And Christ tells us what he means by supreme love to him. It is that, which will lead men to give up all for him; or perfect self-denial. He says, "he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Again he says "Every one, that hath forsaken houses or brethren, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake, shall inherit everlasting life." And still further to explain supreme affection, he says, "if any man come after me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." And he concludes by saying, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple." There cannot be the least degree of sincere love to Christ but what is supreme. And there cannot be supreme love, without being willing to give up all for Christ. This he himself always made the condition of sincerity. He required this of the amiable young man, who could not find it in his heart to comply with this condition of salvation. And he made supreme affection



to himself, the test of Peter's sincerity after his fall.—  
“Simon, son of Jonas lovest thou me more than these.”

3. Sincere love to Christ implies loving him obediently. Sincere love to Christ will always lead to universal obedience to his commands. Hence he made universal obedience the test of sincere affection. “Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven.” On another occasion he said—  
“Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister and mother.” And again he says, “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Again, “If ye love me keep my commandments.” And again, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Love to Christ is the only source and the certain source of obedience to all the divine commands. If any sincerely love Christ, they will sincerely and delightfully do his will. And they will esteem his precepts concerning all things to be right and perform the most self-denying duties as well as other duties with pleasure.

4. Loving Christ sincerely implies loving the doctrines, which he taught. This he made a peculiar mark of sincerity. He told the Jews, “Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.” Again he said, “If a man love me, he will keep my words. He, that loveth me not, keepeth not my words.” The doctrines he taught often proved the test of the affection of his hearers. When he taught the doctrine of divine sovereignty in the congregation of Nazareth, it excited universal resentment, which they manifested by attempting to destroy his life. When he taught his divinity, this was called blasphemy. When he taught the total corruption of the human heart, the scribes and Pharisees

were offended. When he taught the special grace of God in drawing sinners to himself, many of his disciples forsook him. When he taught the necessity of persevering in the love of his doctrines, the believing Jews rose against him and discovered their enmity to the truth. Indeed, his doctrines were the test of the sincerity or insincerity of all who heard him. And the reason is obvious. All his doctrines were only so many branches of the great scheme of redemption, through his sufferings and death. Hence Paul declared, that he determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified in his preaching. And he speaks of the doctrine of the cross as comprising the whole gospel. Hence all, who sincerely love Christ, must love all his doctrines, which serve to unfold his character and designs, and consequently to display his real excellence and glory. It is not conceivable, that any sincere friend of Christ should be an enemy to any one doctrine of the cross, when he rightly understands it. Some sincere christians may be liable to misunderstand some very important doctrines of the gospel; and in that view of them dislike them. But none, who really love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, can knowingly and understandingly reject any doctrines, which belong to that system of truth which Christ taught, and which are essential to the gospel scheme of salvation. Hence our Lord said to the Jews, "Except ye believe, that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." And again, "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the son of man, ye have no life in you."—That is, except ye believe, digest and love the doctrines of the cross, ye cannot be saved. And again he said to certain, who professed to believe, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

5. Sincere love to Christ implies loving his friends and followers. This is abundantly insisted on in Scripture, as implied in Christian sincerity. Our Lord said to his followers, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." And again "These things I command you that ye love one another." The Apostle Paul says, "As touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." The Apostle John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life; because we love the brethren.—He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. If a man say, I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for, he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he, who loveth God, love his brother also." This command the first and sincere disciples of Christ sincerely obeyed.—For we read, "the multitude of them, that believed were of one heart and of one soul." It is the natural tendency of sincere love to Christ to lead his followers to love all his friends. This mark of sincere affection is agreeable to common sense, and the opinion of all mankind in other cases. Those who sincerely love Christ, sincerely love to see him beloved, and feel attached to his friends.

6. Sincere love to Christ implies loving his cause and kingdom. Christ professed to have a kingdom in this world, though not of this world. And he commanded his followers to seek first his kingdom, as an object of the highest importance. And he directed them to pray daily for its advancement. His kingdom includes all the elect and the highest happiness of mankind. It is the

joy that was set before him and the reward of all his sufferings. They, therefore, who sincerely love him, must love his cause and sincerely desire to promote it. Accordingly Christ has made this an infallible test of sincere love and attachment to him. He said, "He that is not for me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." And again, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." Sincere love to Christ always implies the spirit of a martyr to his cause, whether his cause requires the expression of it or not. Again,

7. Loving Christ sincerely implies loving his government. Christ has all power in heaven and earth committed into his hands. He is made head over all things to the church. He is the king of Zion and the universal governor of the world. He now rules in the kingdoms of nature, providence and grace. Their love to him must therefore, lead his friends to rejoice that their God and redeemer liveth.

And Christ says, that he shall treat all as his enemies who do not cordially submit to him. "Bring hither all these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them and slay them before me." Those who do not love the government of Christ, are his enemies and can never be treated as his sincere friends.

From the various and decisive evidences of sincere love to Christ, they, who love him sincerely, may know the sincerity of their love. These evidences of sincere love are intelligible. The truth respecting Christ is plainly and fully taught in the scriptures, so that every person may know what he is in himself. And the other marks of sincere love are equally intelligible. It may also be expected that they who sincerely love Christ, will manifest it. Such love is of such a nature,

that it will manifest itself. Sincere love to Christ will govern the external conduct of real christians. It will lead those who possess it, to profess and manifest their sincere and supreme affection to Jesus Christ. But they who do not sincerely love Christ, may know that they are destitute of that holy love, which is necessary to their admission into the presence and kingdom of the blessed Redeemer.

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### The happiness of Christ's sincere friends.

In the scriptures they, who truly love Christ are declared to be in a happy situation; and the happiness of their situation may appear from the following remarks. In the first place—They are interested in the prayers of all good men. All such persons pray with the apostle, “grace be with all them, that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” Every one who loves Christ sincerely, is a special subject of the prayers of all the church of Christ; of all the saints on earth. And if the united prayers of the whole Israel of God avail much, then it is certainly a great favor to be interested in them. It is, therefore, a happy circumstance to those that love Christ sincerely, that they have, and may know that they have the united prayers of the church universal on earth daily ascending to heaven for their temporal and spiritual good. This is a peculiar favor; for all others have the united prayers of saints against them. Again,

The sincere friends of Christ are entitled to the love of Christ himself, whoever lives to make intercession for them. He loved Lazarus, he loved John, he loved

all his sincere disciples while on earth. And he prayed for them very particularly and fervently just before his death. He said, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world; but for them whom thou hast given me; for they are thine. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word." From this the apostle draws a just and consistent conclusion. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." God always hears Christ and whatever he asks for his sincere followers he always grants. Such persons, therefore, are in a happy situation. For they enjoy the favor and the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again—Christ accepts the services of his sincere friends. Whatever they heartily do, as to Christ and not unto men, is accepted. And Christ has promised to reward them for all their sincere services. He says, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." And he represents all their expressions of sincere love to him, as meeting a gracious acceptance and a glorious reward at the great and last day, when all his friends shall be received into everlasting habitations. And is not this a great source of happiness to the sincere followers of Christ, that he will never forget their labors of love, but finally accept and reward them in the kingdom of glory? He requires them to rejoice on this account. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." This foundation of hope and joy standeth sure, "having this seal; the Lord knoweth them that are his." There is nothing, that sincere christians do from love to Christ, that shall not turn to a glorious and happy account. Their work shall not be

burnt up, but follow them to heaven and work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Again,

The sincere friends of Christ are prepared for the everlasting enjoyment of him in heaven. He has determined that where he is, there his servants shall be. And he represents their being with him, as the source of their highest felicity in heaven. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." It would be no pleasure to those, who do not sincerely love Christ to be with him. Such are unfit for the happiness which results from the enjoyment of him. But those, who love him sincerely will be prepared to enjoy his presence and the displays of his glory in the holiness and happiness of myriads and myriads of this fallen race. They will delight to hear the songs of gratitude and praise arising from all the redeemed to the blessed saviour for his redeeming love. And to be forever with the Lord will be the consummation of blessedness. Thus shall grace, which implies all good, be with them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Through the grace of God they are now in a happy condition and they shall, through his grace, be raised to perfect and endless joy and glory in heaven.

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## Repentance.

### TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE.

Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so that iniquity shall not be your ruin. *Ezekiel xviii, 30.*

Then shall ye remember your own evil ways and your doings, that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations. *Ezekiel xxxvi, 31.*



They went out and preached, that men should repent. *Mark vi, 12.*

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. *Luke xiii, 6.*

Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. *Luke xv, 10.*

God now commandeth all men every where to repent. *Acts xvii, 30.*

But showed first unto them of Damascus and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do works meet for repentance. *Acts xxvi, 20.*

#### QUESTIONS.

1. In what does repentance consist?
2. Does repentance imply a great change in a person?
3. Is repentance the duty of every human being?
4. Is immediate repentance the duty of every impenitent sinner?
5. Are all pious persons truly penitent?
6. May all mankind be divided into two classes from their conduct in respect to repentance?
7. What is the present condition of impenitent sinners?
8. What will be the future condition of sinners, who die in impenitence?
9. Will any thing be of any avail towards the salvation of sinners without repentance?
10. Shall every real penitent be saved?
11. Why is salvation promised and secured to all persons who repent?
12. Is the exercise of real repentance pleasant, or painful?
13. Is repentance an easy duty?
14. What are the works, that are meet for repentance?
15. Why should the angels rejoice over penitent sinners?
16. Is the condition of impenitent sinners exceedingly unhappy?
17. Is it proper to use means to induce sinners to repent?
18. May every person obtain a true knowledge of his own character by knowing his own conduct in respect to repentance?

## Christian discretion in temporal affairs.

*To the Christian Visitor.*

SIR—I send you the present communication in order to notice two or three other points respecting the subject, which I have taken into consideration. Having before noticed idleness and prodigality, I would now mention,

3. The folly of sinful motives in regard to secular interests. Such motives as are suited to strengthen and justify the worst feelings and designs of the human heart, are often used to induce persons to attend to the concerns of this life. Pride, applause, avarice and hypocrisy are frequently used as the main spring to excite attention, diligence and exertion in respect to secular interests and pursuits. But there is no need of such motives for such purposes. Religious considerations are the only proper motives to direct and govern human conduct in respect to temporal concerns. The motives which religion affords, are the most powerful. They may be safely urged upon all persons. Their influence is thorough. They reach the conscience and affect the heart. Such motives are permanent. They continue and increase in their strength. Such motives as are derived from religion in respect to temporal concerns, will apply to all persons and at all times and places. Why, then, should not all persons be guided and governed at all times, by religious considerations, in the management of their temporal concerns? It is very unwise to resort to sinful motives to influence human conduct in respect to secular concerns, when real religion will induce every person, who is truly pious, to guide his affairs with discretion.

4. As it is an important duty to manage temporal affairs with discretion, children ought to be so educated as to perform this duty. The common object and concern for children in respect to worldly property have been to leave a large portion of earthly substance in their hands. But there has generally been but little labour or care to prepare children to manage and use worldly property with discretion. Yet such children as have received the largest portion of earthly property, have commonly managed their temporal concerns in the worst manner. They have commonly abused and wasted their substance. In a sermon preached in New Haven, by the Rev. Dr. Dwight, president of Yale College, he makes the following statement. "Almost all the property, which exists in this town, has been earned by those who possess it. During forty-four years, the term in which I have been acquainted with it, almost all the persons who have inherited considerable property and have left the world, have died poor; very many of them bankrupts; some of them beggars; and scarcely any of them men of wealth. What man would toil through life to earn property with the knowledge, that this would be the issue of his labors? What man of common sense must not perceive the decisive probability furnished by this example, that his labors to hoard up property for his children will issue in this manner?" Now to what cause can we look for such extensive and ruinous indiscretion in respect to worldly property? Chiefly, no doubt, to the improper education of children. Though parents endure much labor and care to obtain property for their children, they do little to prepare their children to guide their affairs with discretion. But it is vastly more important to use property with discretion than to possess large portions of it to be abused and wasted. It is then highly important that children

should be so educated as to be prepared for the discrete management of their temporal concerns.

5. It becomes every person to examine his own conduct in respect to his secular interests. It is not merely their own worldly prosperity, but their duty, that persons ought to regard in their temporal pursuits and labors. Let all, then, enquire and consider, whether they have been influenced by religious motives, in respect to their temporal interests ; whether they serve God or mammon in their daily labors and secular pursuits. They, who are truly pious, from their fear of God and their delight in his commandments, are disposed to guide their affairs with discretion. But they, who have not the fear of God before their eyes and no regard to their duty in their temporal concerns, must give an account of their conduct and of all the property, that is put into their hands. Surely, then, it becomes every person to examine his own conduct in respect to his temporal concerns and be prepared to render an account to God in the great day of judgment. And it does especially concern the professors of religion to consider and perform their duty in respect to their temporal concerns. They have by their profession devoted their time, their strength, their labor and their property to the service and honor of God. If they would act according to their profession and fulfil their solemn engagements, they must be careful and watchful to guide their affairs with discretion. By such conduct they will have leisure for the special duties of religion, do their duty in respect to their success, honor their religious profession, have property for charitable purposes and be prepared to give an account with joy at the final judgment. And they, who are not truly pious, are strongly urged to become religious even in respect to the concerns of this life. If they would manage their concerns

with discretion, they ought to fear God and keep his commandments. If they will so conduct, their temporal affairs will not hinder, but promote their spiritual interests. But if they do not regard God and their duty in the affairs of this life, they can find no real profit in earthly things. Nor can they have any part or lot in the kingdom of God.

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## EXTRACTS.

### Cultivation of the Mind.

Theological reading, which certainly should begin\* with the Bible, is very important. A thorough acquaintance with religious doctrines deeply concerns the welfare of all mankind. It is astonishing to see the ignorance of many persons on these subjects. They have, perhaps for many years, enjoyed advantages of religious instruction, but have never used them to any effect. The being and perfections of God; the immortality of the soul; an endless state of rewards and punishments; a change so amazing as that of death; the unknown realities of the coming world; in short, the immensity of God's kingdom and government; the infinitely varied works of creation; and what man is to himself as a conscious-being; are objects, which seem to call for the utmost exertion of our intellectual powers. To survey, to inquire, to learn, and to know, in the midst of a world of such wonders, demands man's noblest faculties;

It is not less certain, that theological reading should proceed and end with the bible; though not to the exclusion of other books.—Ed.

and certainly furnishes for them the noblest employment.

But the disease of our race seems to be stupidity. Many, too many, plod on through life, thinking only of the present. They scarcely send forward a thought into futurity, till they come upon the brink of the precipice, and it is then too late, even to acquire any settled opinions, or make any preparations. A life of the most extreme thoughtlessness, is closed with a few hours of gloomy, intense, ineffable anxiety and horror.

True religion, as appertaining to the mind, consists in just views and virtuous dispositions. Its genuine tendency is to lead men to the most careful discharge of the duties of life. But it does not stop here. It awakens in a man a due sense of his various relations to things eternal. It holds up to his understanding, a superior light, whereby he perceives clearly, that his best inheritance is in his immortal state. In firm expectation and confidence of future happiness, he is resigned to the course of Providence, and waits patiently the consummation of their hopes.

The propensity prevalent in the human mind to neglect religious studies, extends to the neglect of all mental cultivation; and it is no uncommon thing for people to neglect their minds altogether. Among the eastern nations, there are some who regard religion in the light we do the study of law or physic; that is, an occupation to be followed by a certain class of men. If, instead of the word *religion*, we substitute the phrase, *cultivation of the mind*, such a class may be found almost any where, even in our own country. They complain that they have no time; that they are pressed by business. How many hours in the day do they attend to business? How do they employ their evenings? How do they spend the Sabbath? The fact is, they have too

much time. It hangs, a dead weight, upon their hands. Their business, except in a few extreme cases, is shorter, by several hours, than the day. Their dull, insipid evenings are dozed away in a vacuity of thought. Perhaps they saunter to a neighbor's house, where their conversation is of too trivial and absurd a nature to admit of being specified in a serious discourse; or perhaps they fall upon some amusement for the express purpose of killing time, as some are pleased to style it: or, in other words to pass away the evening, and escape that distressing sense of solitude, which often seizes the vacant mind.

*Killing time!* "Time," says the poet, "is the stuff that life is made of." To waste time, is to squander the main ingredient of life, one of the richest of heaven's blessings. O, righteous Heaven, remember it not against them in the great day of trial! lest it swell the catalogue of their crimes beyond forgiveness. As for their Sabbaths, instituted for the benevolent purpose of suspending servile labor, and acquiring the knowledge of their Creator, they are slept or idled away: yet these people say that they have no time to devote to the improvements of the mind. One of the most important questions a man can ask himself, is, How his time has been spent? To judge of its full import, let us consider what sensations it will excite, when, with imperative tone, it shall obtrude itself upon him in the hour of death.

The most excellent and important of all books, is doubtless the Bible. It contains a glorious manifestation of God's character, perfections, and government, together with the character, duty, and obligations of men, and the only way of life and salvation. It is the felicity of the present day, to possess not only this invaluable book, but to abound in religious writings, of



various descriptions, calculated to strengthen the faith, and cherish the virtues of the Christian. Books of this nature are indispensably necessary to a well chosen library. They abound in discourses, which will give light, comfort, and encouragement to a man, when all human sciences, even when all earthly things, however splendid and beautiful, are fading in his eye.

That species of reading, next in importance to divinity is history. There is seen the rise and fall of states and empires. On one page is delineated the causes of their prosperity, and on another, of their decline. History represents the great concerns of nations in miniature. The picture is grand, but somewhat gloomy; and the correspondent sensations in him who examines it, if at times elevated and delightful, will not fail to be shaded over with melancholy, softened, however, by the distance, and rendered sublime by the magnificence and glory of the object. The historian, however long he walks under the embowering laurel and olive, must at length repose under the cypress shade.

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### Assurance of Salvation.

The true believer desires no assurance of his salvation, but that which has its foundation in holy exercises, and consists in them, so that the former cannot be obtained without the latter. Assurance of salvation would be worth nothing to him, if he could have it without holiness, or while he had no stronger and more sensible exercises of love to Christ than he now has. He therefore does not ask for such assurance, nor desire it. It pleases him, that assurance cannot be obtained in any other way, than in the lively and sensible exercise of holy affection.

There are some, who earnestly desire and long for assurance that they shall be saved, and feel, that if they could obtain this, they should be happy, while holiness is not so much the object of their desire and pursuit.— These are not seeking the assurance which the christian desires, nor can it be true assurance or of any real worth were it obtained, without holiness. Such assurance will satisfy a selfish person; because, if he can be assured that he shall be happy, he cares for no more; and in his idea of happiness, holiness is not included. But not so the true believer.

From the preceding particular, it follows, that the true believer prizes holiness more than assurance, and is more concerned to obtain the former, than the latter.— To be conformed to Christ, and obedient to him in all things, earnestly and constantly devoted to his service and honour, and filled with strong, benevolent love to God, and to man; is a thousand times more the object of his desire and prayer, than to be assured that he shall be saved. Therefore, he desires no other assurance of salvation, than that which is implied in such holiness, as has been observed. Indeed, the true christian, in the exercise of holy affection, or disinterested benevolence to God and man, is seeking more important objects, and events, than his own salvation, and they have the first place in his heart. He seeks first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

On the contrary, the selfish person, desires and seeks his own personal interest, his own happiness, as the most important and supreme good, and if he can be assured of his own happiness, he has all he wants. Therefore, when persons prize and desire assurance of their own salvation, more than holiness, it is a sign that they are not true believers.

The true christian, can have joy and peace in believing, or the joy of faith, without assurance of salvation. The reason of this has just now been given, viz. that he desires and seeks, and consequently places his happiness in better, greater, and more important objects, than his own salvation. He rejoices in the truth. In the truths contained in divine revelation, in the divine character, in infinite wisdom, rectitude and goodness; in the felicity and glory of God; in the character of Christ, and the way of salvation for man, by him.

The selfish person, seeking nothing but his own interest and happiness, can have no religious comfort and joy, any farther than he thinks himself sure, or hopes that he shall be saved. Therefore, his religious light and darkness, his trouble or comfort, arise wholly from, or consist in his fears, that he is no christian, and shall not be saved; and in his hope and confidence that God loves him, and he shall be saved. When this appears to be true of any person, it is a sign he is no real christian.

The hope and confidence of the true believer, that he is a christian, and shall be saved, rises and sinks, according to the degree of holy exercise, in love to God. The hypocrite can enjoy his assurance without any holiness, or concern about it.

Therefore, the only right way to obtain assurance of salvation, is to press forward in the exercise of holiness, in every branch of it, so as to be *sensibly* a friend to Christ, and devoted to his honor and interest.



### The General Resurrection.

• The General Resurrection will put an end to the separate state. When the bodies of all who shall have di-

ed from the beginning of the world, to that time, will be raised, and come forth, in union with the souls that had been separated from them by death. This will take place when Jesus Christ shall come to judgment. This is frequently spoken of in the scriptures, and expressly asserted, in more places than it is needful to mention here, for those who read the bible. Our Saviour says, "The hour is coming, in the which, all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." When the Apostle John, had a vision of the general judgment, the general resurrection is connected with it. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; And they were judged every man according to their works." The Apostle Paul treats particularly of the resurrection of the bodies of the redeemed, as an important and essential doctrine of christianity.

We depend entirely upon divine revelation, for the notice and knowledge of this doctrine of a future resurrection; as it could not be known by any other means. But when we find it revealed, it does not appear contrary to reason, but is agreeable to the dictates of it; and in no respect incredible, if the account the scripture gives of it, be properly considered and understood.—There were indeed, some professing christians in the Apostle's days, as there have been since, who denied this doctrine. This doctrine was thought incredible, impossible and ridiculous by the heathen philosophers, and others, in the days of Christ and his Apostles. And this same incredulity has been transmitted down to this day, among those who pay little or no regard to the bi-

ble. They say, it is impossible, that all the same bodies which have died, should be ever recovered and raised again. It is not thought necessary to state their objections, and answer them here, as this has been done over and over again, by many able writers. It will be sufficient to observe that the remark which Christ made upon the Sadducees, who denied this doctrine, as impossible, is applicable to them, viz. That they do greatly err, because they do not believe, or understand the scriptures: nor the power of God. When they can tell, in what *identity* consists, and what is necessary in order to constitute the resurrection body the *same* with that to which the soul was united in this life; and what omnipotence, and infinite knowledge and wisdom can do, and cannot do, with respect to this; and can prove that the bible is not a revelation from God; then let them undertake to prove, that the doctrine of a general resurrection of the same bodies which have died, or shall die, to the end of the world is impossible or incredible.

The resurrection bodies of the redeemed, will be beautiful and glorious, far beyond our present conception: They will be like the glorified body of the Redeemer; every way fitted for a state of immortality, constant activity, and perfect happiness, as the eternal monuments of the power, wisdom and goodness of Christ. They will have no defect, but be perfectly suited to accommodate and furnish the holy soul, to all that activity, work and enjoyment, which are implied in a state of perfect happiness. This is called in scripture, a *spiritual body*; which some have thought to be a contradiction. It is indeed beyond our comprehension. But where is the inconsistency or impropriety, in calling that a spiritual body, which is so much unlike any body which we know, or of which we can have any adequate

idea, that it is perfectly suited to promote the perceptions, activity and enjoyment of a holy mind, and answer every desirable end, with respect to all external objects?

The bodies of those who died in their sins, will be an awful contrast to those of the redeemed. "They will rise "To shame and everlasting contempt." They will be every way suited to the souls which are wholly sinful, and enemies to God, prepared for condemnation, despair and endless destruction.

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### Christianity.

Much, indeed, may be said in praise of the noble and benevolent exertions of many individuals to promote humanity, order, civility, and virtue among many unhappy nations. They have spared no pains nor expense; they have encountered the dangers of those inclement climes, and the perils of a barbarous land. Their good will in this godlike work has been blessed; they have been found doing their duty, and they shall not lose their reward.

Were the nations, which bear the Christian name, generally engaged in this work—were they desirous to meliorate the condition of savage nations, they might, by a proper course of conduct, at length, remove those prejudices from their minds, which now form insuperable bars to the most benevolent attempts of individuals and societies. Savages derive their views of the character, government, and religion of Christian nations, not from the testimony of a few individuals, but from the conduct of those nations. They reason thus: "If," say they, "Christian nations believe and practise their

religion, we are sure it is the worst in the world ; therefore we will not embrace it : but if Christians do not practice their religion, it is surely because they do not believe in it ; and if they do not believe nor practice it, why should we ? Why should it challenge our assent and conformity, who do not understand it, when those who do, disregard its dictates ?”

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## POETRY.

### Paul's Voyage.

If Paul in Cæsar's court must stand,  
He need not fear the sea ;  
Secur'd from harm on ev'ry hand  
By the divine decree.

Altho' the ship in which he sail'd  
By dreadful storms was toss'd ;  
The promise over all prevailed,  
And not a life was lost.

Jesus ! the God whom Paul ador'd,  
Who saves in time of need ;  
Was then confess'd, by all on board,  
A present help indeed !

Tho' neither sun nor stars were seen,  
Paul knew the lord was near ;  
And faith preserv'd his soul serene,  
When others shook for fear.

Believers thus are toss'd about,  
On life's tempestuous main ;  
But grace assures, beyond a doubt,  
They shall their port attain.



They must, they shall appear one day,  
Before their Savior's throne ;  
The storms they meet with by the way,  
But make his power known.

Their passage lies across the brink  
Of many a threat'ning wave ;  
The world expects to see them sink,  
But Jesus lives to save.

Lord, tho' we are but feeble worms,  
Yet since thy word is past,  
We'll venture thro' a thousand storms,  
To see thy face at last.

NEWTON.

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### Man by Nature, Grace and Glory.

Lord, what is man ! extremes how wide,  
In this mysterious nature join !  
The flesh, to worms and dust ally'd,  
The soul, immortal and divine !

Divine at first, a holy flame  
Kindled by the Almighty's breath ;  
Till, stain'd by sin, it soon became  
The seat of darkness, strife, and death.

But Jesus, Oh ! amazing grace !  
Assum'd our nature as his own,  
Obey'd and suffer'd in our place,  
Then took it with him to his throne.

Now what is man, when grace reveals  
The virtue of a Saviour's blood ?  
Again a life divine he feels,  
Despises earth, and walks with God.

And what in yonder realms above,  
Is ransom'd man ordain'd to be ?  
With honor, holiness, and love,  
Nor seraph more adorn'd than he.

Nearest the throne, and first in song,  
Man shall his hallelujahs raise ;  
While wond'ring angels round him throng,  
And swell the chorus of his praise.

NEWTON.

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### The Curate Relieved.

A violent Welsh squire having taken offence at a poor curate, who employed his leisure hours in mending clocks and watches, applied to the bishop of St. Asaph, with a formal complaint against him for impiously carrying on a trade, contrary to the statute. His lordship having heard the complaint, told the squire he might depend upon it that the strictest justice should be done in the case ; accordingly the mechanic divine was sent for a few days after, when the bishop asked him "How he dared to disgrace his diocese by becoming a mender of clocks and watches?" The other, with all humility answered, "To satisfy the wants of a wife and ten children." "That won't do with me," rejoined the prelate. "I'll inflict such a punishment upon you as shall make you leave off your pitiful trade, I promise you;" and immediately, calling in his secretary, ordered him to make out a presentation for the astonished curate to a living of at least one hundred and fifty pounds per annum.

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